United Nations

A/60/764

General Assembly

Distr.: General
19 April 2006

Original: English

Sixtieth session
Agenda item 112 (e)
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 7 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Latvia to the United Nations presents its compliments to the United Nations Secretariat and, with reference to the former's note dated 31 March 2006 announcing the candidature of the Republic of Latvia to the Human Rights Council at its first elections to be held on 9 May 2006, has the honour to forward, enclosed herewith (see annex), information on the voluntary pledges and commitments of the Government of the Republic of Latvia in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251.

06-31700 (E) 280406

Annex to the note verbale dated 7 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Latvia: voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251

The Government of the Republic of Latvia has decided to present its candidature for the first elections to the Human Rights Council to be held in May 9, 2006, during the 60th session of the UN General Assembly.

Since the restoration of its independence and democracy in 1991, human rights have been one of the priorities of Latvia. Latvia has ratified the key human rights treaties, has adopted the necessary legislation and policies, and strives to support the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world.

Following the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, Latvia was one of the first countries in the region to establish a national human rights institution – the Latvian National Human Rights Office. On April 6, 2006 Latvian Parliament decided to expand the powers of the Office, to include also the functions of a traditional Ombudsperson institution.

In implementation of the Declaration and the Plan of Action of the 2001 Durban World Conference Latvia has adopted the National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance.

The Integration Programme implemented by the Government is unprecedented in scale and serves as an example of successful consolidation of society.

As a member state of the Commission on Human Rights from 1999 to 2001 and through its active involvement in the ensuing years, Latvia has acquired valuable experience of work within the framework of the Commission and has contributed to the streamlining of the Commission's proceedings. During the 55th and 57th Sessions, Latvia was the coordinating country of the Eastern European Group and held the Vice-Presidency of the 55th Session. In 2005, the Commission on Human Rights unanimously adopted a resolution on the work of the UN Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights tabled by Latvia.

Latvia was one of the first countries to issue a standing invitation in 2001 to all Special procedures of the Commission on Human Rights and has strongly supported the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

Latvia is a State Party to all major human rights instruments and has made no reservations thereto:

- International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966;
- International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966;
- International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination of 1966;
- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women of 1979;

- Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 1987;
- Convention of the Rights of the Child of 1989;
- Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons of 1954;
- Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.

Latvia has cleared a backlog in submission of the National Reports on implementation of these instruments to the UN Treaty bodies and submits reports on regular basis and timely manner.

Latvia is unequivocally committed to strive for the highest human rights standards and freedoms. In case of election to the Council Latvia will continue to be actively involved in the dialogue in order to promote and protect human rights.

In case of election to the Human Rights Council, Latvia pledges to:

Internationally:

- Actively participate in the work of the Council for the promotion of universality and indivisibility of all human rights, civil and political as well as economic, social and cultural, including the right to development;

- Contribute to the establishment of the peer review mechanism and accept review by it;

- Contribute to strengthening the system of Special procedures and other expert mechanisms of the Council;

- Continue to contribute to the reform of the treaty monitoring body system and to give due follow-up to the UN human rights mechanisms' recommendations;

- Ensure continuous voluntary contributions to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights;

- Cooperate with the OHCHR to provide experts for technical support to strengthen human rights capacity in States that require such support;

- Contribute to the strengthening of democracy, good governance, rule of law and respect for Human Rights and fundamental freedoms through regional cooperation – Council of Europe and OSCE – and promote the cooperation of the UN with regional human rights bodies;

- Share its positive experience with interested states on the development of institutions and policies promoting human rights and integration of societies;

Domestically:

- Consider further ratifications of human rights treaties avoiding reservations, and examine the possibility for accepting further individual communications' and inquiry procedures;

- Continue cooperation with the treaty monitoring bodies, including by submitting periodic reports on time. As no reports are due for 2006, Latvia undertakes to submit the report to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination due in 2007 in a timely manner;

- Uphold the standing invitation to all Special procedures extended in 2001;

- Continue the implementation of the National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance;

- Improve the protection of the rights of the child and women by implementing the recommendations of the relevant UN human rights mechanisms and special procedures;

- Take measures to eliminate trafficking in human beings by implementing the National Programme against Trafficking in Human Beings;

- Improve the protection and promotion of human rights by the recently strengthened Ombudsperson institution.